

Public Health South

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4/9/2019

Protect your children/students and staff from measles

Public Health South (PHS) is advising schools and Early Childhood Education Centres that there is currently a measles outbreak in the Southern District.

Since 22nd August, five cases of measles have been confirmed in this region and the disease is now likely to be spreading in the wider community.

The number of cases may seem relatively small in comparison with the population, but one person with measles can infect many others. So far, PHS has contacted many people as part of this outbreak investigation. Once exposed, it takes 10-14 days to develop the symptoms of measles. People are not yet infectious over this time.

Measles is a serious and highly infectious viral disease that causes fever, cough, sore red eyes and a rash. Measles can make children and adults very sick and can cause complications in many people, some of which are severe and lifelong.

People with measles can be infectious even before they start feeling unwell. While almost all people will make a complete recovery, it can lead to hospitalisation and in rare cases, death.

Immunisation against measles with two doses of MMR vaccine is the best protection and is free for all eligible people. With schools being back in session, we need your help to prevent further transmission of the measles virus.

Recommendations

- Please check to see that your school immunisation register (if you have one) is up to date.
- Encourage unimmunised children/students to get immunised as soon as possible as per the Immunisation Schedule (MMR at 15 months and 4 years old).
- Encourage staff to check their immune status and get immunised if necessary.
- Keep any children/students or staff who are unwell away from school.
- Public Health South will be in touch with you if there is a confirmed case of measles in your school community – please await our contact and support to help guide messaging to your community.
- If your school is planning on visiting Queenstown and/or going skiing in the near future, please ensure your students and parents are protected. Children/parents who are unvaccinated should not travel.

Our recommendations will help protect people who are at risk, including children who are too young to be immunised, pregnant women who are not immunised, and people with a compromised immune system (such as those receiving treatment for cancer).

Attached is a letter for parents/guardians to send out and a Q & A fact sheet for staff and parents.

We appreciate your help in controlling this measles outbreak. For more information relating to measles, please refer to the:

- Ministry of Health's website
<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles>

Kind regards,

Dr Susan Jack

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Designated by Director General of Health under Section 7 (A) of the Health Act 1956.

Note: Once exposed, it takes 10-14 days to develop the symptoms of measles, such as fever and rash. This is called the incubation period.

You are contagious 5 days before to 5 days after rash onset, counting the day of rash onset as day 1.